



## Russia strikes Ukrainian 'decision-making center' – MOD

MOSCOW (Agencies): A Russian missile strike on Friday hit a command center of the Ukrainian military, Russia's Defense Ministry has said. Russian forces "carried out a group strike with sea and air-based long-range precision weapons against one of the decision-making centers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces," the ministry said in a statement on Saturday. "The aim of the strike was achieved. The intended facility was hit," it added, without providing further details. The Russian Defense Ministry has also published a short video of a missile being fired by a warship as part of what it said was the strike on a Ukrainian "decision-making center." The Russian military previously reported strikes on "decision-making centers" in Ukraine in late May, shortly after a large-scale



drone attack on Moscow, in which several residential buildings were damaged and two people suffered minor injuries. The Defense Ministry said back then that facilities

in Ukraine "where terrorist attacks on Russian soil were being planned under the guidance of specialists from Western intelligence agencies" were hit.

## Sikh Yatrees return to India through Wahga border crossing



LAHORE (APP): The Sikh yatrees, who had come to Pakistan to attend the 417th martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev Ji (Jore Mela), return to their homeland India on Saturday through Wagah border crossing. Additional Secretary Shrines Rana Shahid Saleem, Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) Pardhan Sardar Amir Singh and other committee members presented bouquets and gifts to yatrees and later saw off them. Sikh yatrees party leader Sardar Gurbachan Singh told the media the love they received in Pakistan was the most precious gift for them, adding that the yatrees would spread that love after returning to their country. Rana Shahid said peoples on both sides of the border wanted to meet each other. "Humanity's respect takes precedence," he added. "Whether they were followers of the Sikh faith or Hindu pilgrims, the Pakistani government is committed to issuing maximum number of religious visas," pledged the additional secretary. He said maintenance and upkeep of historical religious sites and temples were the domain of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB). He emphasised the board's efforts in ensuring better care of gurdwaras and temples. "All minorities residing in Pakistan are protected, and they enjoy all constitutional rights and religious freedoms," assured Sardar Amir Singh. Indian Sikh pilgrims also chanted slogans of 'Pakistan Zindabad'.

## Ceasefire agreed as air strikes pummel Sudanese capital

DUBAI/CAIRO (Reuters): Air strikes killed civilians and pummelled multiple parts of the Sudanese capital on Saturday, residents said, as warring military factions agreed to another ceasefire in a series that have failed to stop the violence. Fighting between the Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) is entering its third month with neither side gaining a clear advantage. The war has displaced 2.2 million Sudanese and sent the war-weary Darfur region into a "humanitarian calamity," the United Nations has said. It has killed more than 3,000 people and injured more than 6,000, Sudan's health minister said.

## France hit by rare 'very strong' earthquake

PARIS (Agencies): Several parts of western France were shaken on Friday evening by the biggest earthquake to affect the region in a half-century, prompting the evacuation of some 170 people from the town of La Laigne and damaging several buildings across the locale. The earthquake, which seismologists say registered between 5.2 and 5.8 on the Richter scale, was felt between Rennes in the EU country's north-west and Bordeaux in the south-west. It occurred at approximately 6:30 pm on Friday. Several homes, schools and churches were damaged in the rare quake, which is the

strongest to have hit the region since 1972. Earthquakes with a magnitude above five are rare in France, with the most recent one occurring in November 2019. At least two aftershocks were recorded on Saturday, leading to concerns that buildings damaged in the initial 'quake could become unstable. Authorities have indicated that there were no fatalities in the various affected towns. Two people received injuries as a result of the earthquake in the town of Deux-Sevres. Fallen electricity cables in the neighboring town of Charente-Maritime left around 1,100 people without power.

## Turkish, Dutch, US defense chiefs hold talks on sidelines of key NATO meeting

ANKARA (Agencies): Turkiye's top defense official held separate talks on Friday with his Dutch and US counterparts on the sidelines of a NATO meeting in Brussels, according to the Turkish National Defense Ministry, Anadolu reports. In the meetings, National Defense Minister Yasar Guler discussed bilateral and regional defense, security, and defense industry cooperation with the Netherlands' Kajsja Ollagren and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the ministry said in a statement. Turkiye's top defense official held separate talks on Friday with his Dutch and US counterparts on the sidelines of a

NATO meeting in Brussels, according to the Turkish National Defense Ministry, Anadolu reports. In the meetings, National Defense Minister Yasar Guler discussed bilateral and regional defense, security, and defense industry cooperation with the Netherlands' Kajsja Ollagren and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the ministry said in a statement. The talks were held on the sidelines of a crucial two-day meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) at NATO Headquarters, chaired by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. The gathering assembled defense ministers from allied countries.

## UN chief calls for equal land rights for women to stop land degradation

UNITED NATIONS (APP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for equal land rights for women on the occasion of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, saying such a move would help stop land degradation. "I urge all governments to eliminate legal barriers to women owning land and to involve them in policy-making, support women and girls to play their part in protecting our most precious resource," he said in a video message for the Day, which falls on June 17. "We depend on land for our survival, yet we treat it like dirt," the UN chief added, emphasizing the need for action. Women make up nearly half of the world's agricultural workforce, yet discriminatory practices related to land tenure, credit access, equal pay, and decision-making often impede their active participation in sustaining land health. Today, less than one in five landholders worldwide are women, according to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). "Unsustainable farming is eroding soil 100 times faster than the natural process can restore them, and up to 40 per cent of our planet's land



is now degraded, imperiling food production, threatening biodiversity, and compounding the climate crisis," the UN chief said. "This hits women and girls the hardest," he said. "They suffer disproportionately from the lack of food, water scarcity, and forced migration that result from our mistreatment of land, yet they have the least control." Calling for support for women and girls to play their part in protecting "our most precious resource", he said, "together let's stop land degradation by 2030". Ahead of international day, UNCCD launched the #HerLand campaign to raise awareness about women making a difference now and the challenges ahead. When given equal access, women and girls can increase agricultural productivity, restore land, and build resilience to drought, according to UNCCD.

## 25 killed in militant attack on school in western Uganda: police

KAMPALA (Reuters): Militants linked to Islamic State killed 37 people and abducted six others in an attack on a school in western Uganda near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, the military said on Saturday. Military personnel found the bodies of the dead when they arrived at the school, defence spokesperson Felix Kulayigye said in a statement. "Our forces are pursuing the enemy to rescue those abducted and destroy this group," he said earlier on Twitter. The attackers, from the rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), fled towards Virunga National Park in Congo, police said. Police said eight other people were in hospital with critical injuries after the attack at the Lhubirira Secondary School in Mpondwe. Privately-owned NTV Uganda television said on Twitter that the death toll stood at 41, while state-run New Vision newspaper said it was 42. New Vision said 39 of the dead were students, and that some of those killed died when the attackers set off a bomb as they fled. Neither police nor military said how many of the dead were schoolchildren. The assailants, numbering about five, burnt down a dormitory and

looted food, police and the military said. Major General Dick Olum, the army's commander for western Uganda and in charge of a military deployment in the Democratic Republic of Congo, said the attackers had stayed in the town two days before the attack, marking their target. He said an unidentified youth had gone to the school to check its layout before the attack. "That is how the attackers came and locked the boys' door. The boys really tried to fight back, but they were overpowered. The attackers had lit mattresses," Olum told reporters from Mpondwe, according to a video posted on Twitter by the Daily Monitor newspaper. "In the girls dorm, they found their door open, hence killing them and cutting them." The ADF rebels launched their insurgency against President Yoweri Museveni in the 1990s from an initial base in the Rwenzori Mountains. The group was largely defeated by the Ugandan military but remnants fled across the border into the vast jungles of eastern Congo from where they have since maintained their insurgency - perpetrating attacks on civilian and military targets in both Congo and Uganda.

## Massive fire engulfs 200 shops in W.Afghanistan

Afghanistan (Xinhua/APP): A fire broke out at a big market, engulfing nearly 200 shops, in Afghanistan's western Herat province, Abdul Wadood Faizzada, the provincial head of craftsmen union said Saturday. "The fire broke out at about 3 a.m. local time at Qasr-e-Herat market in 2nd Municipality District of the Herat city, engulfing 200 shops of different commodities, mostly clothes and cosmetics, costing

100 million Afghanis (about 1,163,000 U.S. dollars)," Faizzada told Xinhua. Abdul Latif Insaf, the provincial police spokesperson, said that the blaze, resulting from electrical sparks, occurred Friday midnight but was controlled by the fire department personnel within hours. "The fire left no casualties or injuries but inflicted heavy property losses on the local businesspersons," said the spokesman.

## UK PM Rishi Sunak joins raid on illegal migrants, 105 arrested

LONDON (Agencies): Prime Minister Rishi Sunak joined the UK Home Office enforcement officials on a raid as part of a nationwide crackdown on illegal migration, which ended in the arrest of 105 foreign nationals from across 20 nationalities. Sunak, 43, dressed in a bulletproof vest, attended one of the actions in Brent, north London, earlier this week to observe Immigration Enforcement officers at work as part of their "day of action". The British Indian leader has made cracking down on illegal migration one of his government's top priorities ahead of a general election, expected next year. "Illegal working harms our communities, cheats honest workers out of employment and defrauds the public purse as no taxes are paid," said UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman. "As the Prime Minister has set out, we are committed to tackling the abuse of our laws and borders. We know the prospect of black-market employment is a significant attraction for migrants considering making dangerous and illegal journeys to the UK. Operations such as today send a clear message that we will not stand for this," she said. During



the operation, which took place across the UK on Thursday, Immigration Enforcement officers arrested 105 foreign nationals found working without the right to do so during 159 raids on suspected illegal work establishments. The arrests took place at commercial premises including restaurants, car washes, nail bars, barber shops and convenience stores. Suspects were arrested for offences including illegal working and possession of false documentation, with sums of cash also seized at some locations. Of those arrested, over 40 were detained by the Home Office pending their removal from the UK, with the remaining suspects being released on immigration bail. It is also expected that a number of the arrests will result in a voluntary departure from the UK, the Home Office said.

## Blinken heads to China

WASHINGTON (Agencies): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is en route to Beijing for a high-stakes visit meant to steer relations between the United States and China back on course after months of inflamed tensions between the two nations. Officials from both governments have signaled low expectations for the visit, with a senior State Department official telling reporters earlier this week that he does not expect "a long list of deliverables." Instead, US officials are framing the trip as an effort to resume normal channels

of communication with China in order to avoid conflict between two of the globe's great powers. Blinken's primary goal in China is to reestablish channels of communication, especially direct military-to-military communication, between Washington and Beijing, according to a senior State Department official. The Biden administration's relationship with Beijing is one of its most complicated and consequential, and one that has seen months of strain, including two military-related incidents in recent weeks.

**About Khyber Mail** The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.



## NCHD, UNICEF jointly organize day-long awareness workshop on COVID-19 free booster dose

HARIPUR (Agencies): National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) in collaboration with UNICEF Saturday organized a one-day awareness workshop on COVID-19 free booster dose vaccination campaign at Haripur Press Club. Apart from the media representatives, a large number of people from different walks of life were also present. During the awareness session, the speakers informed that the booster dose is intended for individuals above 18 years of age and enhances the immune response. They

mentioned that during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were hesitant and fearful of getting the COVID-19 vaccine, fearing that it might lead to further illnesses. There were also various rumors circulating that vaccination could cause death, infertility, and other issues. However, during this time, print, social, and electronic media played an important role in raising awareness and encouraging people towards vaccination. They further emphasized that for the COVID-19 free booster dose vaccination campaign,

they are actively engaging educational institutions, media, and the support of civil society in raising awareness. Parents and individuals within society should also play their role. Earlier, Executive Director Madathar Rahman of N.C.H.D. highlighted that their organization has been actively working for social welfare and development for the past 22 years, particularly in collaboration with the health department and social welfare for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, with a special focus on raising awareness.

## Sherpao terms May 9 blackest day in country's history

PESHAWAR (APP): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday termed May 9 the blackest day in the country's history and demanded strict punishment for those who took the law into their hands. Speaking at a meeting of party office-bearers at Zaim Union Council in Charsadda district, he said that military installations were attacked and government buildings and state properties were vandalized during the so-called protests on May 9 mayhem across the country. "The country has never experienced such vandalism and chaotic situation. Even Pakistan's enemies could not dare attack the country's military installations the way the miscreants indulged in vandalism under a pre-planned conspiracy to weaken the foundations of the motherland," he lamented, calling for severe punishment for the perpetrators, their abettors and instigators. Aftab Sherpao said that giving any relief to the perpetrators of violence by any institution would amount to treason against the state. Holding the PTI chairman responsible for the mayhem, the QWP leader said Imran Khan not only pitted the state institutions against each other but also poisoned the minds of the young people. He vowed that his party would spare no effort to work for the welfare of the young generation to create jobs for them in order to steer them away from negative activities. He said that Imran Khan had a cult following, which was harmful for the country, adding the PTI even tarnished Pakistan's image at the international level. Aftab Sherpao said Imran Khan was ousted from power through the vote of no-confidence,



which was a democratic process, but the PTI chairman lacked the moral courage to concede defeat by swallowing his pride. "Instead of facing defeat gracefully, Imran Khan has resorted to dirty tricks by instigating his cult followers to campaign against the country's interests," he remarked, adding that the PTI leadership had asked the world not to extend financial support to Pakistan facing the economic crunch, resulting in the impasse with International Monetary Fund. The previous PTI government, he maintained, was responsible for the prevailing state of economic affairs. Commenting on the recent federal budget, he said although the government announced salary raise for government employees, it was not in line with the rising price-hike. Aftab Sherpao urged the federal government to give KP its share in the Kissan Package and the 5,000 solar tubewells to be installed across the country to boost agriculture in the province. He said that KP had lagged far behind in the race of development due to misrule and bad

governance over the last 10 years. The entire system was riddled with corrupt practices and there was a dire need for reforms to fight the tax evasion, he expressed. Sherpao said that smuggling was taking place unchecked in KP, which had caused colossal loss to the provincial economy in the shape of tax theft, adding that coordination lacked between the Centre and the provincial governments. He also expressed concern over the long hours of electricity loadshedding in KP, saying the province produced surplus power, but its residents faced prolonged power cuts after rise in mercury. The QWP leader said that the cash-strapped KP was in dire financial straits, lacking funds to prepare the next budget. He said that the province had virtually gone bankrupt due to the flawed policies of the previous PTI government. He said that the provincial government should put in place the price control mechanism to provide relief to the have-nots by bringing down the prices of the daily-use commodities.

## Envoys of Czech Republic, EU explore cultural heritage in city

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Pakistan, Tomas Smetanka and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka arrived on a memorable visit to Peshawar on Saturday. The purpose of their visit was to attend the EU film festival, which was scheduled to take place in the city. During their stay in Peshawar, they had the opportunity to visit various historical and cultural landmarks, including Masjid Mahabat Khan, Sethi House and famous antiques' market at Asamai Gate. Hosted by the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, Ambassador Tomas Smetanka and Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka expressed their delight in exploring the rich history and heritage of Peshawar. Their visit to Masjid Mahabat Khan included a meeting with Maulana Tayyab Qureshi, the caretaker of the mosque, where they were presented with a bouquet of flowers

and enjoyed the hospitality of the locals with a refreshing cup of green tea, a tradition of the people of Peshawar. The delegates were fascinated by the antique jewelry showcased during their visit to Sarafa Bazar. Additionally, they had the privilege of meeting Mr. Waheed Sethi, the current owner of Sethi House, one of the esteemed historical sites in Peshawar. The visit provided an opportunity for cultural exchange and appreciation of the region's architectural wonders. The culinary experience was equally delightful, as the crew of the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar graciously treated the distinguished guests to "Sobat" (Penda), a traditional dish of the Marwat Tribes. This culinary experience was made possible through the initiatives of Barrister Assad Saifullah Khan, the Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic has

been working since 2018, when Barrister Assad Saifullah Khan became the first Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar. The consulate has proved a milestone in the promotion of friendly relations between the Czech Republic and the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Czech Consulate in Peshawar is working as a turning point and milestone, leading to a brighter future for Pakistan and the Republic's ties. Barrister Assad Saifullah Khan is working day and night for the promotion of trade and the resolution of issues between the republic and the KP people. The visit showcased the strong bond between Pakistan and the Czech Republic, as well as the European Union's commitment to fostering cultural exchanges and strengthening relations with Pakistan. The delegation's exploration of Peshawar's cultural heritage highlighted the city's historical significance and its vibrant traditions.

## Distt admin holds meeting on dengue prevention

KOHAT (Agencies): The district administration on Saturday held a meeting regarding the prevention of the spread of dengue virus in the district. On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dr Azmatullah Wazir under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner (AC) Dara Aamir Nawaz, a meeting was held regarding the prevention of the spread of dengue virus in which officers from Tehsil Municipal Administrations (TMAs), local government, health department, police department and other relevant depart-

ments participated. AC said, "It is important to inform the public about preventive measures to prevent the spread of dengue virus." He further said, "It is not possible to defeat dengue without the cooperation of the people." AC said, "To prevent the dengue virus, do not let water stand in your homes and keep water containers covered in your homes and avoid littering to keep your surroundings clean." "Cooperate with the relevant staff of public health as much as possible to eradicate the dengue virus," he said.

## PPC increases 60 seats of students in GU's Faculty of Pharmacy

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan Pharmacy Council (PPC) has increased 60 seats of students for admissions in the Faculty of Pharmacy in Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan. According to a press release issued here, the number of admission seats was increased by the PPC due to the special efforts of Gomal University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Shakib Ullah and Dean Faculty of Pharmacy Dr. Barkat Ali. A notification has also been issued in this regard. According to a notification issued by PPC Acting Secretary Dr. Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui, formal approval has been given to increase 60 seats of students for 30 each in morning and evening programs in the Faculty of Pharmacy of Gomal University. After this increase, 200

students including 100 each in morning and the evening programs will be able to take admission in the Faculty of Pharmacy of Gomal University. The Gomal University VC congratulated all the teachers, officers, employees and students of the varsity on this occasion. He said was of the view that by increasing 60 seats in the Faculty of Pharmacy would benefit a number of students besides helping the university to improve its financial condition. He lauded the role of Dean Faculty of Pharmacy Dr. Barkat Ali and his team in this success, saying, he pay tribute to them. He expressed the hope that all the teachers, officers and employees of Gomal University would play their due role for the development and prosperity of the university.

## FPCCI, CRBC agree to jointly work for economic stability of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and China Road & Bridge Corporation (CRBC) have agreed on working together on various projects of economic stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to create employment opportunities through mutual cooperation in Rashakai Special Economic Zone. In this connection, an important meeting was held here in FPCCI Regional Office on Saturday. Those who attended the meeting were included Regional Coordinator, FPCCI, Sartaj Ahmad Khan, Secretary Peshawar Chamber of Small Trade & Industry, Akbar Sethi and Regional Secretary FPCCI, Engineer Khalid Haider, Mr Dawood of the Chinese origin represented CRBC. During the meeting, various issues relating to strengthening of Pak-China Friendship and particularly taking benefit of the best experiences of the business communities of both countries, especially Rashakai Special Economic Zone came under discussion. Talking on the occasion, Coordinator FPCCI, Sartaj Ahmad Khan assured

the CRBC representative of complete cooperation and said that he his grateful to the People's Republic of China and Chinese business community for initiating various projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Rashakai Special Economic Zone. He said that said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has several potential sectors for Chinese investment, which will not only help in further strengthening of bilateral relations between both countries including promotion of mutual partnership among the investors and generate employment opportunities for unemployed youth of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In response to the proposals of the FPCCI, the CRBC representative said that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this regard would be signed soon to start practical work. He said that they do not believe in giving merely verbal assurances rather believe in practical work and success of both friendly countries. At the end of the meeting, the CRBC official was presented a memorable shield of the FPCCI and booklet of the budgetary proposals.

## CM aide visits Central Jail Haripur

HARIPUR (APP): The adviser to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Jail Affairs Hidayatullah Khan Afridi on Saturday paid a surprise visit to Central Jail Haripur and inspected the facilities being provided to jail inmates. The jail superintendent briefed the visiting dignitary about the history, progress, and issues related to the prisoners. Afterward, he inspected the entire jail, including the women's barracks, hospital, juvenile section and areas for adult prisoners. Hidayatullah Khan

also visited the kitchen, factory area and other facilities, assessing various vocational training centers. He was briefed on the improvement of health facilities for the prisoners, such as advanced pathology labs, X-ray facilities, and dental care. During his visit, the adviser appreciated the efforts of the administration in providing the best services for the reformation and rehabilitation of the inmates. He also directed to resolve the genuine issues of the inmates on the prisoners' requests and for necessary actions.

## Chairman E-Hujra Strongly Condemns Tragic Incident in Landi Kotal District

PESHAWAR (Staff Report): Mr Asif Qureshi, chairman e-hujra has strongly condemns the tragic incident in Landi Kotal district involving the murder of female education officer. In a press release he said: "It is with deep sorrow and profound sadness that e-Hujra addresses the tragic incident that occurred in Landi Kotal District, Khyber. We strongly condemn this act of violence and extend our heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of the female education officer who lost her life. First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to the Afridi Tribe and the honorable police officers for their remarkable cooperation and relentless efforts in dealing with this unfortunate incident. The swift response and exemplary performance of SSP Investigation, Mr. Zia Hassan Khan, from District Khyber, have been instrumental in uncovering the truth. Through thorough investigation, it



was revealed that the husband of the victim, Mr. Najeebullah, son of Khan Ullah Azeem Kalla Domail, was responsible for this abhorrent act. This revelation brings us one step closer to ensuring justice for the victim and her family. During this difficult time, the Afridi Tribe has shown remarkable patience, cooperation, and understanding. Rather than succumbing to tension or discord, you have exemplified unity and supported the police authorities in carrying out their duties. Your responsible behavior and

willingness to assist in the investigation have significantly contributed to the resolution of this case. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each and every member of the Afridi Tribe for upholding the principles of justice, unity, and cooperation. Your unwavering support sets a commendable example for all communities. I would also like to acknowledge and commend the dedicated efforts of the police officers involved, including SHO Gul Muhammad Khan from



Police Station Domel, SSP Police Khan Zia Haider Khan, and their colleagues. Under the guidance of SSP Investigation, Mr. Zia Hassan Khan, they have demonstrated a commitment to uncovering the truth and ensuring that the perpetrator is brought to justice. The collaboration and teamwork between the Afridi Tribe and the police force in this case have showcased the power of unity in the pursuit of justice. Let us continue to foster harmony, understanding, and mutual re-

spect within our community, ensuring that such tragic incidents remain isolated and justice prevails. Once again, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Afridi Tribe and the diligent police officers, including SSP Investigation Khyber Police, Mr. Zia Hassan Khan, SHO Thana Domel, Mr. Gul Muhammad Khan, SSP Police Khyber, Mr. Zia Haider Khan, and their colleagues, for their invaluable contributions. Together, let us work towards the betterment and safety of our community."





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## Remittances: A Vital Pillar for Pakistan's Economy

Remittances have long played a crucial role in stabilizing Pakistan's economy by providing much-needed foreign exchange. However, recent trends have raised concerns among policymakers and the government. During the ten-month period from July to April, remittances experienced a significant 13 percent decline, amounting to \$22.7 billion, compared to the previous fiscal year's total of \$31.7 billion. This downward trajectory warrants careful attention and strategic action. Pakistan's economy has faced persistent challenges since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, struggling to achieve stable growth. Factors such as continuous rupee devaluation, a decline in foreign direct investment (FDI), and dwindling reserves have hindered meaningful progress. These circumstances have further amplified the country's reliance on foreign remittances. Given the imminent risk of an economic collapse, it is crucial to address the barriers to international payments. Political stability and the rising cost of living worldwide are two key factors contributing to the decline in foreign cash inflows. The political and economic environment in Pakistan has been marked by turmoil, creating uncertainties about the nation's future. Consequently, individuals have shifted from official to unofficial channels for money transfers to evade taxes and circumvent State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) restrictions aimed at reducing imports and controlling the outflow of dollars. This unofficial channel, commonly known as the Hawala/Hundi system, has significantly contributed to the decline in remittances. Additionally, the global surge in inflation has led to increased living costs abroad, resulting in a decrease in funds sent back home, particularly from Europe.

While the past two months have shown promising growth, it is vital to take further action to sustain this positive trajectory. Policies addressing the gap between unofficial and official foreign exchange markets, as well as curbing the demand for Hawala/Hundi transactions, can help maintain steady growth. Encouraging the use of official channels by providing incentives and streamlining the process of financial transactions through inter-bank partnerships and increased transfer allowances can address these demands and gaps. Similarly, promoting political stability by fostering relationships between political parties and upholding the principles of democracy is crucial for tangible progress to occur. It is imperative for Pakistan to recognize the significance of remittances and take proactive measures to strengthen and protect this vital pillar of the economy. By addressing the challenges, fostering stability, and promoting official channels, Pakistan can ensure a more resilient and prosperous economic future.

## Why wouldn't China draw Cuba into the new Cold War?

— By Timur Fomenko

Last week an unnamed-sources-based story in the Wall Street Journal claimed that China is set to pay Cuba to build a "secret spy base" in the country. The island, adjacent to the United States, has long been a huge geopolitical flash-point following the Communist Revolution in the country in 1960, which brought it to the highest point of Cold War tensions – the Cuban Missile crisis. Although there is no tangible evidence as to whether this spy-base story is true or not, it is however clear that as US-China tensions rise, the Caribbean country is yet again becoming a geopolitical football as a means of getting at the US. As a communist state situated right on America's doorstep, one which Washington is overwhelmingly hostile against and has long sought to subjugate, why wouldn't China take the opportunity to use Cuba to the US' annoyance? It would be foolish not to do so. Still, there is some context to consider. First of all, the US is currently gripped by extreme paranoia regarding China. Almost all things pertaining to Beijing in recent months have been accused, almost always without evidence, of being a covert means for espionage of some sorts. There are no rational limits to what may come under the crosshairs, and the bar for the definition of "spying" is so low it might as well not exist.

Secondly, the US has long baselessly accused China of constructing secret bases in third-party countries, often in a bid to undermine its relationship with those countries. This includes a so-called "naval base" in Cambodia, a base in the Solomon Islands, a base in Equatorial Guinea in West Africa, a base in the United Arab Emirates and so on. This would make it logical for allegations of a Chinese base in Cuba to be a perfect McCarthyist fantasy: one communist state the US is irrationally paranoid about using another communist state it is also obsessed with as a means to undermine Washington. It's a Marco Rubio wet dream. But that doesn't mean China doesn't have good reasons to do so. For all the paranoia, it is the US that is currently pursuing a full militarization of China's periphery. It is pushing countries for more military bases and defence agreements, it is flying reconnaissance flights against Beijing almost daily, it is sailing war-

ships through the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. The US believes it has a divine right to spy on and confront China, and if the Chinese retaliate, well, they are the bad guys. Therefore, if you were China, why wouldn't you take advantage of the existence of Cuba and give the US a taste of its own medicine? Cuba of course overtly welcomes the rise and role of China. Havana is subject to a 60-year-long economic blockade by the US that has tried to impoverish and crush the country, as well as to remove its government. Following the end of the Cold War, the demise of the Soviet Union isolated and weakened Cuba. It is, given the events of the past few decades, nothing short of a miracle that the US did not decide to openly invade the country during its unipolar era, with several other "hostile" regimes during that period meeting such a fate. Thus, the rise of another long-term communist friend as an economic superpower is a huge benefactor for Cuba, because it finally gives it a new option as a source of trade, investment and, of course, a geopolitical guarantee of protection. Cuba has become a critical partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has involved China modernizing the country's ports, building telecommunication infrastructure and collaborating on energy. Latin American states as a whole have strengthened their relationships with China precisely because it allows them to escape US hegemony, which has long unilaterally subjected the region to its preferences. But Cuba especially gives China leverage over the US, given the provocative way Washington is interfering with Taiwan, so the idea of a "spy base" is realistic. Although Beijing's relationship with Havana will never become a military alliance, and likely never replicate the events of the last Cold War, it is an important strategic partner in responding to and containing the US. Cuba of course is not a threat to the US, but it is a nuisance and a menace ideologically, and what better way is there to respond to the US than by ensuring that its attempts to strangle, contain and stop Cuba from thriving never succeed? Beijing believes Havana should succeed through economic development and, spy base or not, that's what it will do here.

- Courtesy: RT

## Turkiye foreign policy in the new era — By Anadolu Agency

Turkiye is a middle power, and the transformation of the international system from the US-led unipolarity to a multi-actor centric multipolarity over the last decade is in its national interest. Assessing how Turkish foreign policy might evolve in the years to come with Hakan Fidan at the helm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be incomplete if the changing dynamics of the international system were not taken into account.

- Fidan as the core of Turkish foreign policy  
Fidan has been in the inner circle of foreign policy-making process since his appointment to the head of the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) in 2010. He has played a critical role in shaping and implementation of various foreign policy decisions that were built on the assumptions that we are now living in a post-American international order and putting the concept of "strategic autonomy" at the very centre of Türkiye's international engagements would yield positive results.

Fidan appears to have played critical roles in Türkiye's involvement in the civil wars in Syria and Libya during the process of the Arab Spring, establishing cordial strategic relations with Russia, in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict and paving the way for normalisation of relations with Sunni regimes in the Middle East and Israel. He was also included in many high-level meetings between Turkish authorities and their traditional Western counterparts. With such a professional performance and institutional experience in the background, Fidan's appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs suggests that the main dynamics of Turkish foreign policy will likely continue in the near future.

Fidan has academic degrees in International Relations at undergraduate and graduate levels and this suggests that he could successfully combine theoretical and conceptual skills with practical necessities of foreign policy. Having served as Türkiye's intelligence chief and engineered a radical transformation of the National Intelligence Agency in such a way to equip it with conceptual, institutional and operational requirements of the contemporary age, Fidan has proved his capacity to modernise state institu-

tions and make them more relevant to the needs of today's world. He could engineer such a transformation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and catapult the Ministry to a more vital role in the formulation and execution of foreign policies.

- Continuity of multidimensional policies

The core issues concerning Turkish foreign policy in the recent past will continue to keep busy the new presidential government in the near to mid-term, as well. Of all, the enlargement of NATO to Sweden is the most urgent one. With the war in Ukraine getting more intractable each passing day, and the Western commitment to Ukraine's security and defence increasing, Türkiye might be exposed to growing Western pressure to lift its embargo on Sweden's accession to NATO. Having joined the trilateral negotiations among Türkiye, Sweden and Finland since May 2002, Fidan will be the most competent person to oversee this process on Türkiye's behalf by the time NATO's next summit gathers in Vilnius in July. Having won the latest parliamentary and presidential elections, and aspiring to improve relations with traditional Western partners in the context of deteriorating security environment in its neighbourhood, as well as securing Western backing to putting the Turkish economy in a much healthier path, Turkish statesmen, including Fidan, will likely play facilitative and constructive roles in this process.

Türkiye's determination to contribute to the end of the civil war in Syria will also continue during Fidan's reign in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Paving the way for Syria-origin immigrants in Türkiye to go back to their country of origin in safety will require not only the continuation of multilateral negotiations among Turkish, Russian, Iranian and Syrian officials, but also improving the strategic dialogue between Turkish and American authorities. No one could rival Fidan in this regard, given his competence, experience and acquaintance with his counterparts. The same logic does also apply to the civil war in Libya. Even though the consensus view among academics and pundits who study Türkiye-European Union (EU) relations is that bilateral relations have, in recent years, become

more transactional, pragmatic and interest-driven than value-oriented, this does in no way suggest that Turkish authorities, including Fidan, will not ask their European counterparts to put more efforts on improving the Customs Union with Türkiye, facilitating the visa liberalisation process and taking Türkiye's concerns on the refugee deal more into account.

Turkish authorities are aware of the fact that cold war like tension and confrontations between rival blocs, liberal democracies and illiberal autocracies, has been on the rise in recent years and this produces negative outcomes on Türkiye's "Ankara-centric" multi-dimensional and multi-directional foreign policy orientation. As a middle power with strong geopolitical ambitions in its region and globally, Türkiye benefits from the emerging multipolarity in the international system and finds pursuing balance of power politics among regional and global powers in its national interest. Any worsening of the international environment, in which the manoeuvring capability of such middle powers as Türkiye decreases, will not serve Türkiye's interests. Turkish authorities are also cognizant of the fact that Türkiye is a swing state, whose geopolitical orientation would matter to how geopolitical competition among global heavyweights would evolve. Türkiye's geopolitical preferences are vital to the end result of the emerging cold war like competition. That said, just as Türkiye will continue its strategic working relationship and dialogue with Russia as well as China, and the key countries of the so-called Global South, it will simultaneously value its membership in NATO and the accession process with the EU.

While taking great pains at playing great powers off against each other, Türkiye's efforts to improve its relations with the countries of the Global South in order to help preserve its strategic manoeuvring capability, as well as putting constraints on the United States, China and Russia will continue. It is, after all, in Türkiye's national interest that the Hobbesian-confrontational characters of the international system are replaced by a more Kantian-cooperative environment.

- Courtesy: Middle East Monitor

## Partygate: Parliamentary democracy the winner as Boris Johnson departs — By Mohamed Chebaro

UK ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson has angrily resigned as an MP, claiming that he had been forced out in a ploy by his political opponents. He has apparently decided to jump ship and resign before being sanctioned by the special parliamentary committee that was investigating whether the 58-year-old populist repeatedly lied to Parliament after he broke COVID-19 lockdown rules while he was in office — a saga referred to in the UK as "Partygate." Johnson's resignation will likely be seen as a form of revenge on PM Rishi Sunak and an attempt to disrupt his premiership. Sunak has inherited a Conservative Party that is well down in the polls to the main opposition Labour Party after 13 years in power, and with a general election looming next year. But above all his resignation raises the question of whether Britain has finally seen the back of this colorful and divisive politician. The months-long investigation by the Privileges Committee, which has a majority of MPs from Johnson's own Conservative Party, goes to show that the parliamentary system is still able to weed out unruly leaders who try to act as if they are above the law. Even Johnson's popularity — along with his 80-seat majority in the December 2019 general election on the promise to "get Brexit done" and later his ability to push through his less-than-perfect UK-EU divorce deal — did not help his case when it came to breaking the rules of conduct for elected politicians in Britain. By quitting, Johnson avoids the consequences of a humiliating fight to remain an MP. But he did not quit without denouncing the committee, calling it a "kangaroo court," which his supporters also did when the committee invited him to testify. During his testimony in March, he plainly said that he would judge the committee on its findings; in other words, if it refrained

from sanctioning him, then he would respect the ruling, but if the reputable committee elected to recommend that he was sanctioned by Parliament, then he would "think that would be not only unfair, but I think it would be wrong." In his resignation statement, Johnson, as expected, alluded — like any populist leader and bad loser — to his "bewilderment" and said that he felt appalled that he could be forced out in an antidemocratic way due to the Privileges Committee's "bias." While the committee's report is yet to be published, he elected to jump before he was pushed as, to his mind, the committee's purpose was to find him guilty regardless of the facts. The controversial UK leader's rise and fall, however, should be seen as a vote of confidence in parliamentary democracy. UK MPs, who are elected by the people as their representatives, usually have the final say on taming errant politicians, including those who, like Johnson, have tried to circumvent and undermine parliamentary rules and practices and tried to apply a presidential style of government. Responding to Johnson's resignation, a Privileges Committee spokesperson said he had "impugned the integrity of the House by his statement." The world will have watched with amazement the chapters of setbacks and scandals that plagued British politics on Johnson's watch. But his luck continues to fade, as the COVID-19-era party scandals forced him to quit as an MP less than a year after 60 members of his own government, including Sunak, resigned and forced him out of office as prime minister. However, rumors have persisted that Johnson, a thrice-married father of at least eight children, has not given up hope of returning for another shot at the top job. His rise to power was a conventional one, as he attended the elitist Eton College and Oxford University. His

"cavalier attitude" was noted early on by a teacher. And later his apparent belief that rules were for other people, in addition to his elastic relationship with the truth, were forged when he was president of the Oxford Union, a debating society founded on rhetoric and repartee rather than mastery of cold, hard facts.

After university, he was sacked from The Times newspaper after making up a quote, before he joined The Daily Telegraph as its Brussels correspondent, from where he became popular among Conservative euroskeptics for feeding them "euromyths," such as EU plans for a federal mega-state that threatened British sovereignty.

He became an MP in 2001 and, three years later, was sacked from the shadow Cabinet by Tory leader Michael Howard for lying about an extramarital affair. From 2008 to 2016, he served two terms as mayor of London, promoting himself as a pro-EU liberal, a stance which he abandoned to become the "Leave" campaign's figurehead for the 2016 Brexit referendum, capitalizing on his popular image as an unconventional but likeable rogue.

Unlike former US President Donald Trump, who has blamed all his legal troubles on a conspiracy by his Democratic and liberal opponents, Johnson is blaming his demise on a "witch hunt" conducted against him by sections of his own party and Parliament. But it is not difficult for many to see how he has conspired against himself in his pursuit of his agenda of fame and gratification, breaking every rule of decency and public service on the way. Finally, his former colleagues in Parliament have managed to put a stop to his excesses and the damage he has caused to British public life and its reputation around the world.

- Courtesy: Arab News



## Matter settled between TLP, govt: Rana Sana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Saturday announced that after the successful negotiations with the government, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) had called off its "Pakistan Bachao March" (Save Pakistan March). He was addressing a press conference flanked by TLP's leader Shafiq Amini. The minister said that after the second round of talks, crucial matters were settled with the TLP. He said that talks were primar-

ily focused on safeguarding the Prophethood, and curbing blasphemy which is integral to every Muslim's faith. Regarding the TLP's demand for the release of Aafia Siddiqui, Sanaullah described her case as a national issue that saddened every Pakistani. He urged human rights organizations to pay attention to her situation and assured that the government would write a letter to United States (US) authorities regarding her imprison-

ment, considering her 86-year sentence unfair. Rana Sanaullah said that the government also accepted other demands of TLP, including a reduction in petrol prices. He said Finance Minister Ishaq Dar briefed the TLP negotiators about how petrol prices were determined and assured them to decrease petrol prices and resolve issues peacefully. The TLP leader appreciated the government for avoiding confrontation, unlike its predecessor.

## CTD arrests six 'terrorists' in different areas of Punjab

LAHORE (APP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab has arrested six alleged terrorists during operations in different areas of Punjab. According to a spokesman, the CTD Punjab conducted 55 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in different districts of the province, interrogated 50 suspected persons, arrested six alleged terrorists and recovered weapons, explosives and prohibited material from them. Among the arrested terrorists, three belonged to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and they were identified as Liaquatullah, Nadeem Khan and Inayatullah. One arrested terrorist is a member of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, who was identified as Muhammad Younis, one Muhammad

Ammar belongs to Daesh, and the last one Ijaz Ahmed is a member of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the spokesperson said. According to the spokesman, 1,358 grams of explosives, one hand-grenade, 6.53-foot prima card, one laptop, 82 pamphlets, 45 stickers, two flags, six receipt books and 18,800 rupees in cash were recovered from the alleged terrorists. He said the alleged terrorists had planned to carry out various sabotage activities across the province, and they wanted to target important installations and religious places. The police have registered six cases against the arrested alleged terrorists in Multan, Gujranwala and DG Khan and shifted them to an undisclosed location for investigation, he added.

## Governor inaugurates 15th food technology Asia 2023 int'l exhibition

KARACHI (Agencies): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on Saturday inaugurated the 15th Food Technology Asia-2023 International Exhibition. While addressing the inauguration ceremony, he said that Pakistan was a fertile agricultural country but in spite of that, the matter of food in the country was significant. He said that the issue of food insecurity could be faced through such exhibitions.

The Governor said that there was a need to take advantage of the experience of international experts. He said that the use of the latest technology for agriculture was inevitable. Kamran Tessori said that agricultural production could be increased with the research on seeds. He said that the presence of Turkey, Oman and other countries in the exhibition was appreciated.

## Police arrested suspect in murder case of businessman, politician

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Police have arrested a suspect and recovered two mobile phones during the ongoing investigation in the murder case of a local businessman and politician on Saturday. According to police sources, the body of former City Nazam, candidate for provincial assembly and local businessman Mian Muhammad Hussain alias Munna Sheikh was found from his outhouse yesterday. The rescue 1122 officials reached the spot and recovered the compounded body from the blanket. The family members said that the deceased Munna Sheikh was not in contact of the family members from the last five to six days and his mobile phones also were not responding during these days. On Friday, after a smell from his outhouse situated at Muhallah Sheikhupura, the family members recovered his compounded

body covered in blankets. Civil Lines police registered the case against unknown outlaws on the application of his nephew Tassaduq Shahzad s/o Shiekh Ashiq Hussain and stated the investigations into the incident. DSP City Circle Rehan Rasool Afghan along with the forensic team and heavy contingents of police reached the spot and collected evidences from the crime scene. Talking to media persons, DSP Rehan said that as per the initial autopsy report, the deceased was killed with repeated blows of a sharp edged weapon on his head. He said that police have also taken two mobile phones from the scene adding that the investigation was continued with a rapid pace and the criminals would be behind the bar soon. However, police have also taken a suspect into custody who was being interrogated.

## Wearing earphones regularly for long-hours can cause ear infections, ENT expert warns

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Health experts on Saturday stressed awareness for youngsters using earphones as long-term exposure to loud music makes the hair cells eventually lose their sensitivity to vibration and asked to avoid sharing earphones which will lead to infection from one person to another person. Around a billion youngsters across the globe including Pakistan could be at risk of hearing loss because of unsafe listening habits through earphones, ENT Specialist Dr Saifulah Mir said while talking to a Private news channel. He further explained that using earphones has become quite common in this digital world, adding, it has also been observed that people do share their earphones amongst friends and family members which is quite dangerous. Earphones and AirPods no doubt have become mandatory acces-



sories for the present life but they are also triggering ear infections, he added. Replying to a question, he said ears producing wax can protect the skin of the canal, help in cleaning and lubrication, and also provide protection from dust and other foreign particles. The expert added that people need to allow their ears a good chance to clean themselves, so encouraged a switch to over-ear alternatives instead. Continuous listening at higher sound volume for long hours is weakening the listening ability also," he added.

## DSP jail killed, 6 injured in accident

RENALA KHURD (APP): A jail deputy superintendent of police (DSP) was killed and six passengers were injured in a collision between a van and a tractor-trolley near village Sukhpur, here on Saturday. Police sources said

that accident took place as the van carrying passengers and tractor-trolley both were over-speeding. The DSP was identified as Asim Hameed. Rescue-1122 personnel shifted the body and the injured to the area hospital.

## IRSA releases 225,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 225,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 307,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1452.65 feet and was 54.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 145,400 cusecs and 90,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1146.20 feet, which was 96.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 55,400 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 107,900, 119,000, 65,700 and 22,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 64,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 21,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

## 11 ASIs of Highway Patrol promoted

FAISALABAD (APP): Eleven Assistant Sub Inspectors (ASIs) of the Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) police have been promoted as Sub Inspectors (SIs) in the Faisalabad region. Spokesman Inspector Rizwan Bhatti said here on Saturday that the promotion board reviewed promotion cases of 125 ASIs belonging to Punjab province and approved promotion of 111 ASIs including 11 ASIs belonging to Faisalabad region. Among them included ASIs Irshad-Ullah Kalyar, Zafar, Irshad Ali, Atif Sardar, Tahir Ahsan, Mudassar Kaleem, Zaheer, Muhammad Akhtar, Zaheer Abbas, Shahid and Zaffar. SSP Patrolling Police Faisalabad Region Mirza Anjum Kamal congratulated the newly promoted Sub-Inspectors.

## 10 killed, several injured in road mishap

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): At least ten passengers were killed while other several injured when a passenger bus hit a pillar on the elevated road after the brakes of the bus failed near Kallar Kahar on Saturday afternoon. According to details, the spokesperson of Rescue 1122 said the incident occurred near Kallar Kahar this afternoon which claimed ten lives on the spot, a private news channel reported. The motorway police evacuated the people trapped inside the bus, rescue officials said. Rescue sources added that the accident took place when the bus was traveling from Islamabad to Lahore.

## FS, Iranian minister discuss bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Foreign Secretary Asad Malik on Saturday held fruitful and wide-ranging discussions with Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Ali Bagheri Kani during the 12th bilateral consultations in Tehran. According to Foreign Office, the two sides held talks on the entire spectrum of relations and agreed to deepen cooperation in trade, energy, transport, connectivity, cultural exchanges and educational linkages.

## Balochistan cabinet seeks 33 additional Medical seats

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan cabinet has sought 33 additional seats for three Medical College of the province, a handout issued on Saturday said. The request was made in two separate messages sent by Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo to Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel and President Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Islamabad Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj.

## Canadian High Commission & Serena Hotels Screen Docu-Drama "Minahil" to highlights the journey of Booni Girls Ice Hockey Team from Chitral



Islamabad (Adnan Hameed): Serena Hotels is partnering with the High Commission of Canada, Pakistan, to uplift and empower rural communities in the Gilgit-Baltistan Region as part of the High Commission's signature sports diplomacy initiative. This effort by the High Commission and the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan aims to empower women and girls, drive socio-economic development at the community level, promote sustainable tourism, and raise awareness about climate change and environmental conservation. The docu-drama Minahil highlights the inspiring journey of the Booni Girls ice hockey team (Chitral), showcasing their determination and the transformative power of inclusion and gender equality, reminding all that human rights are universal, and that women's rights require attention, remarked Wajahat Malik, filmmaker of this docu-drama. The fourth edition of this event saw the High Commission of Canada, Pakistan, and Serena Hotels partnering to bring the stories of personal victories and achievements to the big screen. "Minahil" Premiered at Islamabad Serena Hotel, uniting supporters of gender equality, sports enthusiasts, and champions of women's empowerment. Through this collaboration, Serena Hotels & the High Commission of Canada aim to support the empowerment of rural communities and promote inclusivity and gender equality by inspiring positive change for environment conservation through such collaborations.

Amanda DeSadeleer, First Secretary for Political and Public Affairs at the High Commission of Canada, expressed her enthusiasm for the project stating, "The Booni story is a powerful one, specifically girls' ice hockey, which has been at the heart of their journey. With the hope to inspire the rest of the world as they watch these courageous girls become confident, successful young women both on and off the ice. Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia, commented on the film's impact, stating that stories like this should be showcased on a global platform, as it promotes and showcases the potential of the females of Pakistan positively and proactively, especially in adventure sports. Serena Hotels has been actively supporting women in sports by providing them with the Hotels platform via sponsorships by Serena. Notable mentions are acclaimed mountaineer Samina Baig whose first solo climb was in sponsorship of Serena Hotels talented footballer Karishma Ali to attend the Global Sports Week in Paris, France. Other sports & adventure initiatives include a partnership with different diplomatic missions, which entails Cricket for blind girls, where professional players train young girls & Serena hosts matches to hone their talent, providing them with skills to help them build their futures. Along with a mentorship programme that the management launched with professional female golf players to encourage the participation of females in golf.

## PARC organizes training workshop for rice growers

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Agricultural Engineering Institute (AEI) of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has organized a seminar and training program for rice growers at Daska, Sialkot for enhancing rice yields through education and training on the advantages of utilizing specialized machinery for rice cultivation and harvesting. The seminar was also aimed to highlight the drawbacks of traditional methods, said a press release issued here on Saturday. Prominent participants were comprised of Dr Asif Ali Mirani, DG, AED, PARC, Dr Hafiz Sultan Mehmood, Director, AEI, NARC along with experts, researchers, engineers, program leaders and representatives from agricultural organizations. Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali, Chairman PARC emphasized the significance of rice as Pakistan's second major cash crop, following wheat and highlighted the need

of using modern farming equipment and high-yielding varieties to enhance productivity and combat the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector. Rice cultivation primarily takes place in fertile regions of Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan, providing a livelihood for a significant number of farmers, he said adding that as compared to wheat, rice mechanization in Pakistan was relatively low, leading to delays in sowing and reduced yields due to manual labor. Moreover, labor shortages caused by urbanization and industrialization pose a significant challenge for farmers, he added. Dr Ali suggested that adopting mechanization and utilizing head-feeding combine harvesters could provide viable solutions to tackle these issues. During the fiscal year 2021-22, he said rice cultivation encompasses a land area of 3,537 thousand hectares, yielding a total of 9.323 million tons.



## NA passes resolution for transfer of SDGs-project funds to Non-Lapsable Account

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The National Assembly on Saturday passed a resolution demanding the transfer of the amount of development projects, executed under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme, to the Non-Lapsable Account (NLA) at the end of the fiscal year (2022-23). The resolution, moved by Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshed Ahmed Shah, was unanimously adopted by the House during the ongoing budget session, chaired by National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf. The resolution stated that funds were issued to each and every district by the federal

government to carry out development activities under the SDGs. Accordingly, it said tenders had been floated in the current fiscal year for various projects that were in progress and had so far not been completed. In the past, the resolution said the development funds remained lapsing at the end of fiscal years which led to the non-completion of the projects, causing considerable dent to the national exchequer and creating problems for the public. So, it said the House demanded that the Community Development Funds be transferred to the NLA at the end of the fiscal year.

## 12 Pakistanis identified among survivors of Greece boat disaster

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A total of twelve Pakistanis were identified among the survivors of the capsized boat off the coast of Greece, but so far the number and identity of Pakistani nationals among the deceased was not yet verified. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in a press statement on Saturday, said that the Pakistan Mission in Greece under the leadership of Ambassador Aamar Aftab remained in contact with the local authorities for identification and recovery of Pakistani nationals among the deceased and providing relief to the survivors.

"Our Mission also remains in contact with the Greek authorities in the identification process of the 78 recovered bodies. This identification process will take place through DNA-matching with close family members (parents and children only)," the spokesperson further said. Families of likely passengers on board the ill-fated boat were requested to contact Pak Mission in Greece on the 24/7 helpline numbers for verification purposes. They were also requested to share DNA reports from authenticated laboratories and the identity documents of the passenger at 'info@pakistanembassy.gr'

## President approves appointment of Rector of Hyderabad Institute for Technology

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has accorded his approval to the appointment of Saeeduddin Shaikh as Rector Hyderabad Institute for Technology and Management Sciences. The appointment was granted under section 13 of the Hyderabad Institute for

Technology and Management Sciences Act, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Saturday. The president approved the appointment after holding interviews with three candidates recommended for the post of rector by the search committee.

## Capacity Building Course held for police

BAHAWALPUR (APP): On the instructions of senior police officials and the District Police Officer, a "Capacity Building Course" was held for police here on Saturday. According to the police spokesman, on the directions of senior officials of the Punjab Police and District Police Officer (DPO) Syed Muhammad Abbas, a capacity-building course was held for investigation officers of the district police here. The participants of the course were equipped

with knowledge and techniques on laws, rules and regulations, investigation techniques, crime scene management and ethics. The lectures were delivered by senior officials including Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) (Legal) Abdul Rauf Javed, Superintendent of Police (SP) (Retd) Kanwar Muhammad Qasim, Additional District Public Prosecutor and others.

## Shandur Polo festival to be held on July 7



ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A two-day Shandur Polo Festival 2023 would be held from July 7 to 9 to entertain the participants coming from various parts of the country at large. Shandur Polo Festival is an amazing festival celebrated by the tribes of Gilgit and Chitral in the northern parts of the country, said a news release received here on Saturday. The tribes from the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral meet at the Shandur pass every summer. Summer and

autumn are considered ideal for exploring the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. The pass has a beautiful polo ground where unique wild free-style polo is used to play among different teams of the region. Shandur Polo Ground is considered to be the highest polo ground in the world at 3,700 meter. The polo ground is adjacent to Shandur lake. The festival provides an amazing cultural experience in the Hindukush mountain ranges.

## Nullah desilting, roads patching to be done before monsoon: DC

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Adnan Mehmood Awan has said that desilting of Nullah Bhed and patching of the city roads will be completed before start of the monsoon season. The ongoing projects for rehabilitation of Talab Sheikh Mola Stadium, Wall of Sialkot and construction of footpaths in Kutchehry would also be completed within the stipulated time-line, he added. The DC issued instructions to the departments and agencies concerned while addressing a meeting called to review budget, tax recovery, municipal services and development projects of Municipal Corporation Sialkot. Municipal Corporation Sialkot Administrator Muhammad Iqbal, COMCS Malik Ijaz, XEN Chaudhry Asim, municipal officers Planning Regulation and Services were also present. DC Adnan Mehmood ordered to install zigzag

lights on various streets of the city including Shahabpura and Sublime Flyover streetlights as per the government policy. He also ordered for completion of under-construction squares in Sardar Begum and Gulshan-e-Iqbal Chowk, Pasrur Road and said no further delay would be tolerated. The deputy commissioner said that for sale of sacrificial animals on Eidul Azha, quality arrangements should be made with the help of private contractor of the cattle market, set up at Golophala on Akbarabad Chowk and Wazirabad Road and the open sale of animals in the city should be discouraged. The DC also issued orders to the Buildings inspectors for immediate recovery of arrears for commercialisation. He issued instructions for continuous action against encroachments to ensure smooth flow of traffic in city and restore damaged traffic signals.

## National Day of Russia commemorated in Pakistan

Islamabad (Adnan Hameed): The Russian Embassy in Pakistan held a reception to commemorate the National Day of Russia in a local hotel of Islamabad. The reception was attended by the Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan H.E. Danila Ganich, Embassy staff, their family members, representatives of the diplomatic corps, politicians, and social and political activists of Pakistan. Eminent guests included President of the Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies Ms. Sehar Kamran and Honorary Consul General of Russia in Peshawar Mr. Muhammad Arsallah Khan. The Chief Guest of the reception was H.E. Mr. Azam Nazeer Tarar, the Federal Minister for Law and Justice of Pakistan. H.E. Danila Ganich, Ambassador of the Russian Federation said during his opening remarks that in this difficult time Pakistan need Russia and Russia need Pakistan. He also expressed his country's desire to expand trade relations with Pakistan. "Today Russia's national day is being celebrated not only in Russia but also in Pakistan," he said, adding, "Today, on this auspicious day, I also felicitate the people of Pakistan. Ganich also showed his country's willingness to make both Pakistan and India sit at the negotiating table for the resolution of Kashmir issue. During the reception, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Danila Ganich awarded a recognition certificate to Mr. Muhammad Arsallah Khan for facilitating the rescue of a Russian climber Alexander Gukov in 2018.

The chief guest of the evening, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazir Tarar said that the start of freight shipping between Russia and Pakistan and the arrival of Russian oil yesterday was a great step. The minister expressed these views while addressing the National Day of Russia. He said that Pakistan valued relations with Russia and Russian co-



operation. There was great scope for mutual investment, economic development and new employment opportunities between the two countries, he added. He said that ways of cooperation between Pakistan and Russia in various fields had started to open. The arrival of Russian oil in Pakistan was the beginning of a new era of cooperation between the two countries, he added. He further said that Pakistan was a very favorable and attractive country for Russian investors. There was scope for extensive cooperation with Russia in trade, economy, security, defense, counter-terrorism, education, culture and other fields, he added. The federal minister said that the relationship between the two

countries span a long period of time. "Our mutual relations have matured over time to meet the demands of a changing world and these friendly relations between the two countries will set new paths for common goals,". On his concluding remarks, Azam also prayed that the friendship between the two countries may be sustainable and further developed to reach new heights and Pak-Russia friendship may prove to be a practical model for the promotion of peace and security in the region and the world.

The reception also featured a photo exhibition of the finest collection of art works by famous Russian painters. The reception was concluded with the lavish dinner

## Need of agriculture sector uplift urged for attaining growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Saturday said that agricultural sector can play a very key role in increasing exports, reducing imports and achieving sustainable economic growth in the country. He expressed these views, while talking to the members of the Agro Committee of the Chamber, which met him under the chairmanship of the Convenor Committee Chaudhry Sohail, said a press release. In the last one year, the trade deficit has reduced from \$17 billion to \$3 billion because of measures taken by the government, he said adding that in order to completely eliminate the deficit, attention should be paid to increase the export of fruits, vegetables and other agricultural commodities. He said that the promotion of research is necessary to increase the efficiency of the agricultural sector and urged the government to mobilize embassies to promote Pakistani products to new markets of the world. Being an agrarian economy, agriculture is the lifeline for Pakistani economy, he said adding that Pakistan achieved a record production of 27.5 million tons of wheat this year despite the devastating floods. Similarly, Pakistan ranks fifth with 88.7 million tonnes of sugarcane output, 10th with 9.3 million tonnes of rice, 20th with 10 million tonnes of maize, 5th with 2.3 million tonnes of mango and sixth with 2.1 million tonnes of onion production, he remarked. Pakistan should take steps to take its agricultural products to traditional as well as non-traditional markets, focusing on Central Asian countries, he added.

## MNAs suggest radical reforms in key sectors to achieve sustainable economic growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Lawmakers in the National Assembly on Saturday continued debate on the federal budget for fiscal year 2023-24, suggesting measures to improve key sectors including communication, water reservoirs, agriculture and energy on modern lines to achieve the required goals of macroeconomic stability and growth trajectory. Participating in the debate for budget 2023-24, Riaz-ul-Haq of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said the allocated funds for NHA (National Highway Authority) and water resources including new reservoirs in the next fiscal year were insufficient. He said the construction of major dams would take around 10 to 15 years to complete with the existing ratio of funds allocation, highlighting the water scarcity being faced in the country. The lawmaker also highlighted the ever-increasing energy needs terming it a "crucial issue" for Pakistan, and recalled that during the last tenure of PML-N around 12,000 megawatts of electricity were added to the power system under the leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. However, in the past four years, he regretted that there had been no progress in this sector, which resulted in load shedding being witnessed in the country. He emphasized the need to develop a comprehensive plan to eliminate circular debt in the energy sector. He proposed reforms and accountability for the institutions like the Pakistan International Airlines, Pakistan Steel Mills and Khushhali Bank. He mentioned that while the textile sector had been given significant incentives, similar incentives should be given to the

energy and other sectors. Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians lawmaker Shagufta Jumani said the incumbent government presented the budget in difficult economic conditions as it inherited the sinking economy that had been stabilized to some extent and now putting on a consistent path of growth. She voiced concern over the political temperature and the public frustration, adding had the democracy and politics been properly aligned, this situation would have not emerged. "When genuine constitutional, democratic, and political parties are suppressed, such situations arise." She regretted the May 9 incident and said political parties always loved their motherland and respected sacrifices of martyrs, and never thought of indulging in the anti-state activities. She said it was unfortunate that a political party misled the youth for achieving its nefarious designs, adding there should be a strategy in the budget to bring them back on track and make them useful citizens of the society. The political parties in the country that are in decline love their land and do not ignite the country. She said that the budget should allocate funds to set the misled generation back on the right track. PML-N's Nisar Ahmed Cheema said provision of budget session special honorarium to the National Assembly staff should be ensured in a judicious manner and before the Eid-ul-Azha. He expressed serious concerns over the May 9 vandalism of military installations and memorials of martyrs by workers of a political party, suggesting stern action against the elements in accordance with law and the Constitution.

## FESCO issues shutdown programme

Wahhab, Shah Burhan, Jani Shah and Jhok Millian feeders, connected with 132-kV Chiniot grid station, will observe shutdown from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Sunday. Similarly, electricity supply from FIEDMC, Ghani Surmax, DJW, Coca Cola, Orient Material and Karas Paint feeders attached with 132-KV FIEDMC grid station, Hayat Chemia No.2, Time Surmax No.2, Hyundai Nishat and Aafriid feeders originating from 132-KV FIEDMC-II grid station, Millat Road, Sargodha Road, Ghausia Abad, Dawood, Sandal, University

Town, Noor Pur, FDA City, Crescent Board, Dry Port and Muslim Town feeders linked with 132-KV Chiniot Road grid station, Scarp-I feeder connected with 132-KV Chak Jhumra grid station, Marzi Pura, Rehman Abad, GM Abad, Subhan Abad, Qadir Abad and Kashmir Road feeders attached with 132-KV Narwala Road grid station, Roshan Wala, Samanabad, MGM, Chenab Garden, Four Season, Dasoha, Elyas Garden and Miani feeders originating from 132-KV Samundri Road grid station.



## Hacker groups issue threat to European banking system

LONDON (Agencies): Three hacker groups, Anonymous Sudan, REvil and Killnet, plan to conduct a cyberattack on European banks, according to a joint video statement posted online by the groups. They claimed that the attacks will come in response to the West's supply of weapons to Ukraine. The country has been in a state of conflict with neighboring Russia since February last year. Russia faced unprecedented economic sanctions from the EU

and was disconnected from the international SWIFT money-exchange system, in response to its military operation in Ukraine. "This is not a DDoS attack, the games are over. We call on all active groups to engage in destructive activity against the European banking system. No money – no weapons – no Kiev regime," an anonymous Killnet representative says in the video. "Many European banks will be targeted, and we will hit without mercy," the Anonymous Sudan

representative added. The leader of Killnet – with the nickname Killmilk – confirmed to news outlet Lenta.ru on Thursday that preparations for the attack were underway and the action was to begin within 48 hours. IT experts warned that, apart from the direct attacks on banks, hackers are likely to target the SWIFT system, on which the majority of international banking transactions are based. However, they doubt such an attack will be successful.

## US debt hits historic high

NEW YORK (Agencies): US national debt passed a record \$32 trillion for the first time ever this week, data released on Friday by the Treasury Department shows. The milestone was reached less than two weeks after President Joe Biden signed a bill suspending Washington's \$31.4 trillion limit, averting what would have been a first-ever US debt default. The measure allowed the country's government to borrow unlimited funds

until January 1, 2025, when the debt ceiling suspension ends. This means the government can continue to pay for services at home, such as social security and Medicare, by borrowing money abroad and effectively amassing even more debt. The ceiling was scrapped following repeated warnings from the US Treasury that unless the step was taken, the country would default on its obligations. The borrowing limit was reached back

in January, and the Treasury had a limited arsenal of measures it could implement to stave off the default, which was expected to happen in early June. The warnings prompted a heated, months-long debate between Republicans and Democrats over spending priorities, which put the measure's approval at risk. On the first business day after the debt ceiling was scrapped, federal borrowing surged roughly \$400 billion.

## IEA warns of possible oil shortage

HONG KONG (Agencies): The International Energy Agency (IEA) has raised its outlook for world oil demand to a record high of 102.3 million barrels a day this year, saying it will be powered by faster-growing economies in the developing world. In its latest medium-term market report released this week, the IEA projects global oil demand to grow 6% between 2022 and 2028 to reach 105.7 million barrels per day (bpd), up 5.9 million bpd compared to 2022 levels. That growth will be supported by strong demand from the petrochemical and aviation sectors, it said. According to



the report, around three-quarters of the increase in the six-year period to 2028 will come from Asia, with India surpassing China as the main source of growth by 2027. Oil demand in North America and Europe will be

in "contractionary mode" for most of the period in light of energy transition policies, the agency said. China, which is experiencing a post-pandemic rebound in oil demand in the first half of 2023, was projected to see demand growth slow from 2024 onward. However, the IEA noted that the global petrochemical sector will remain the key driver of global oil demand growth, with liquified petroleum gas (LPG), ethane, and naphtha accounting for more than half of the increase between 2022 and 2028 and nearly 90% of the increase compared with pre-pandemic levels.

## Russia reveals scale of trade in national currencies

MOSCOW (Agencies): The Russian government is preparing new mechanisms for cross-border settlements to meet new demand for non-dollar dominated trade, President Vladimir Putin said on Friday at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Russia and its main trading partners such as China and India started to

switch to national currencies in mutual trade after Moscow was slapped with sanctions that effectively cut it off from the Western financial system. President Putin described the progress towards the adoption of national currencies such as the Russian ruble and the Chinese yuan in trade as "noticeable." "Today about 90% of settlements

with the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union are made in rubles. More than 80% of settlements with China are made in rubles and yuan," the president told the forum. The Eurasian Economic Union is a Russian-led alliance that currently brings together five post-Soviet countries, namely Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.

## Saudi industry minister continues investment drive tour with Germany visit

RIYADH (Agencies): German investment in the Saudi mining sector was one of the key topics of discussion when the Kingdom's industry minister met with a leading Bavarian politician. Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Alkhorayef held talks with Roland Weigert, vice minister in the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Regional Development and Energy, as part of his visit to Germany. The pair also discussed ways to enhance the Saudi-German partnership and exchange expertise, as well as focusing on the promising investment opportunities between the two countries, according to the Saudi Press Agency. Alkhorayef's visit to Germany aims to boost the Kingdom's



industrial and mining sectors, which are among the major pillars of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative to diversify the economy away from oil and attract foreign investment. Mining is one of the 13 strategic sectors in the plan, and there is an estimated \$1.3 trillion worth of resources to be excavated in the Kingdom. As well as meeting with Weigert during his trip to Germany, Alkhorayef also visited the Technical University of Munich. The minister

was briefed about its engineering, artificial intelligence, and Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies, and discussed cooperation and partnership with the university's officials in academic research, specialized in the industrial and mining sectors. Alkhorayef's Germany visit came a week after he held similar meetings in France as part of Saudi Arabia's drive to attract foreign investment into its economy. The minister met with leading business figures at the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce in Paris, and he emphasized the Kingdom's keenness to facilitate investment. Saudi Arabia has been working to transform its mining industry into the third pillar of its national strategy.

## Dubai's YallaHub gears up to expand presence in Saudi Arabia

CAIRO (Agencies): Seeking to explore the immense growth opportunities in Saudi Arabia, Dubai-based e-commerce facilitator YallaHub launched a full-throttle expansion plan to enter the Kingdom's burgeoning market by the second quarter of 2023. Founded at the end of 2022, YallaHub is a marketplace aggregator and digital distributor that enables brands to scale their e-commerce businesses on a regional and global level. In an interview with



Arab News, Leo Dovbenko, CEO and co-founder of YallaHub, said that the company has set its strategy on Gulf expansion with Saudi Arabia being the primary market. "Saudi Arabia's expansion presents

a significant growth opportunity for YallaHub. By entering the Kingdom, YallaHub will tap into its large consumer base, leverage the country's favorable economic conditions, utilize well-developed infrastructure, and establish strategic partnerships," Dovbenko said. The CEO announced that YallaHub, with its ambitious objectives, has initiated its expansion process and is set to officially commence operations in Saudi Arabia by mid-summer 2023.

## Russian-UAE economic cooperation praised at St. Petersburg International Economic Forum

ST. PETERSBURG (Agencies): Russian firms are keen to develop further ties with the UAE, the country's deputy prime minister has insisted in a speech lauding economic links between the two nations. Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Denis Manturov — also Russia's industry and trade minister — noted the special nature of Russian-Emirati relations, which includes strong ties of friendship and a rich history of cooperation based on the principles of mutual respect and trust. His comments came after the ruler of



the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah, Sheikh Saud Al-Qasimi, took part in the opening of the UAE's pavilion at the forum, marking the country's role as a guest at the event. Trade turnover between the two countries has doubled over the past

year and now amounts to \$10 billion, and Manturov said: "We are constantly expanding the range of areas in which we build joint work. "We are implementing a number of industrial cooperation projects, initiatives in the field of transport and services, energy and food security. "We have started an active negotiation process on a free trade agreement between the UAE and the states of the Eurasian Economic Union. "This will give an additional impetus to the comprehensive development of our multilateral trade and economic ties."

## S. Korean gov't sees economic downturn for 5th month

SEOUL (Xinhua/APP): South Korea saw its economy remain in a state of a downturn for the fifth consecutive month due to a continued slump in the manufacturing industry, the government report showed on Friday. The Ministry of Economy and Finance said in its monthly report, called Green Book, that the South Korean economy continued to slow down mainly in exports and manufacturing amid slowing headline inflation. The ministry maintained its pessimistic stance on the economy since

February. It noted that downside risks to the economy were somewhat eased on the back of a moderate recovery in domestic demand, an improved economic sentiment, and solid employment growth. The country's export sank 15.2 percent in May from a year earlier, keeping a downward trend for the eighth straight month. Trade balance remained in the red for the 15th successive month in May, while the current account balance posted a deficit of 790 million U.S. dollars in April.

## Wall St Week Ahead Investor skepticism turns to optimism as U.S. stock rally rolls on

NEW YORK (Reuters): A few months ago, most investors feared having too much exposure to equities. Now many are worried they may not have enough. The 15% year-to-date rally in the S&P 500 (SPX) is pulling once doubtful investors back into the market. Many who had whittled down stock hold-

ings during 2022's painful decline are shifting gears. The National Association of Active Investment Managers' exposure index last week hit its highest level since late 2021, while cash levels among global fund managers surveyed this month by Bank of America fell to their lowest point since January 2022.

## Italy rules Pirelli's Chinese top investor cannot choose CEO

ROME (Reuters): Italy's government has ruled that China's Sinochem (600500.SS) cannot designate the chief executive of tyre maker Pirelli (PIRC.MI) despite being its main shareholder with a 37% stake, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Saturday. The decision is part of the measures announced this week by Rome's right-wing administration to shield the autonomy of Pirelli and its management. Sinochem and Pirelli declined to comment. Rome's move came after Sinochem notified the Italian government in March of plans to renew and update an existing shareholder pact with fellow investor Camfin, the vehicle of Pirelli's CEO Marco



Tronchetti Provera. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's administration scrutinised the pact under "Golden Power" rules aimed at protecting assets deemed strategic for the country, at a time when relations between China and Western countries have become more strained. Asking not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter, the source said Rome had ruled that only Camfin could indicate CEO candidates for Pirelli.

## Japan to open up Apple- and Google-dominated phone apps to competition

TOKYO (Reuters): Japan plans to stoke competition in smartphone app payments, dominated by Apple (AAPL.O) and Google, by banning major app store operators from forcing software developers to use the operators' own payment systems, a government panel said. The final report by the panel, released on Friday, also said major suppliers of smartphone operating systems (OS) should be obliged to offer users alternative ways to obtain apps in a secure manner other than their own app stores. Apple's iOS and Android from Alphabet's (GOOGL.O) Google roughly split Japan's mobile OS market. Apple allows users to down-



load iPhone apps only through its own app store, while both Apple and Google require software developers to use proprietary payment systems that charge commissions of up to 30%. The report said that necessary legislative measures will be looked into next, while the Asahi Shimbun daily reported on Saturday the government aims to submit a related bill to parliament as early as next year.

## Twitter to focus on video, commerce in business revamp

NEW YORK (Reuters): Twitter plans to focus on video, creator and commerce partnerships to revitalize the social media company's business beyond digital advertising, according to an investor presentation by owner Elon Musk and new Chief Executive Linda Yaccarino that was reviewed by Reuters. Yaccarino, who started as CEO on June 5, told Twitter investors on Thursday that the company is in early conversations with political and entertainment figures, payments services and news and media publishers on potential partnerships, said a source familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a private investor call. The presentation was Yaccarino's first time addressing the company's investors, the source said. After Musk acquired Twitter in October, the social media firm faced months of chaos, including



layoffs of thousands of employees, criticism over lax content moderation, and an exodus of many advertisers who did not want their ads appearing next to inappropriate content. Musk's hiring of Yaccarino, a longtime advertising executive who modernized ad sales at Comcast-owned entertainment and news conglomerate NBCUniversal, was a signal that digital ads remained a priority for Twitter.

## WestJet to shut down Sunwing Airlines

NEW YORK (Reuters): WestJet group is planning to wind down low-cost carrier Sunwing Airlines and integrate it into its main business, according to a memo seen by Reuters. The move is part of the integration process by WestJet which completed the acquisition of Sunwing airlines in May. Once the integration is complete, all Sunwing employees will continue to have employment with Westjet, said Len



Corrado, President, Sunwing Airlines, in the internal memo sent to the employees. The news was first reported by Canadian Press in CBC.



## Shaheen back for Pakistan as squad named for Sri Lanka Tests

Karachi (AFP/APP): Lanky pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi was named Saturday in Pakistan's 16-man squad to play two Tests in Sri Lanka next month – his first outing in the long form of the game in a year. The 23-year-old injured a knee in Sri Lanka last July and missed Pakistan's home Test series against Australia, England and New Zealand. Shaheen, who has 99 wickets in 25 Tests, featured in the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia last year, but injured the same knee in the final. He is back to full fitness, however, and played in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) as well as featuring in the T20I and ODI series against New Zealand earlier this year. "I am very excited to be returning to the Pakistan Test side after a year," Shaheen said, according to a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) statement. "I dearly missed Test cricket and it was tough for me to be away from this format. I am eager to make an impactful comeback." Prolific young batter Mohammad Huraire and allrounder Aamer Jamal have been picked for the first



time. Huraire, 21, scored 986 runs in his first domestic season in 2021 and during the course became the second youngest Pakistani behind Javed Mianad to hit a triple hundred. He again topped the chart last year with a tally of 1,024. The two-match Sri Lanka series will be Pakistan's first assignment in the new World Test Championship cycle, which runs from 2023-2025. The squad will assemble in Karachi on

July 3 for a camp before departing for Sri Lanka on July 9. The itinerary of the tour has not been announced yet. Squad: Babar Azam (captain), Mohammad Rizwan, Aamer Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Huraire, Mohammad Nawaz, Naseem Shah, Noman Ali, Agha Salman, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Saud Shakeel, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood

## China's Hangzhou fully prepared to host 19th Asian Games

BEIJING (Agencies): China's Hangzhou is fully prepared to host the 19th Asian Games as construction of all venues and facilities was completed in April. The two-week sporting event which was postponed last year because of Covid-19, will be held from Sept 23 to Oct. 8 this year. All the venues for the games have passed their acceptance inspection. Also, over 30 test events and rehearsals of the events have been completed, a group of international media was briefed during a press tour organized by Xinhua. The member of media visited Hangzhou E-sports Center, LGD Club, Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center, Tennis Center and Swimming Center. Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province and one of the seven ancient capitals of China will host the Asian Games with a focus on green and sustainable principles supported by high-tech, according to organizers. Green energy sources, such as solar and wind power, have been widely implemented in all the Games venues. Furthermore, online services, digital products, and state-of-the-art facilities have been put in place, eagerly anticipating the arrival of participants from across Asia in approximately 100 days. Hangzhou metro line 19, adorned with the emblem and slogan of the 19th Asian Games, connects the city's railway stations



and international airport, providing significant convenience for residents since its launch last year. The venues for the games are spread across six zones in the cities of Hangzhou, Ningbo, Wenzhou, Jinhua, Shaoxing, and Huzhou. More than 8 million people have already visited the competition and training venues. "The venues have become popular destinations for the public to engage in sports activities. A series of rehearsal activities have been conducted to further enhance the operations, catering, medical, and transportation services. Currently, all the venues are fully prepared for the Games", a senior official said. Currently, Hangzhou has completed a 516-kilometre rail transit and a 480-kilometre expressway network, ensuring smooth

transportation during the Games and establishing a solid foundation for the long-term integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta. To mark the 100-day countdown to the Hangzhou Asian Games, the Asiad flame was lit in the archaeological ruins of Liangzhu ancient city in Zhejiang and the medal designs was released. All 45 national and regional Olympic Committees in Asia have registered for the Hangzhou Asiad, demonstrating immense enthusiasm for the event. More than 900 Chinese athletes will be pursuing their dreams at the Hangzhou Asiad. Hangzhou will become the third city in China to host Asia's premier sports event, after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong Province, in 2010.

## Teams withdraw from Tour of Switzerland in wake of Maeder tragedy

Geneva (AFP/APP): The Tudor Pro Cycling and Intermarche teams withdrew on Saturday from the Tour of Switzerland following the death of Swiss cyclist Gino Maeder. Maeder, who rode for Team Bahrain Victorious, fell into a ravine in the downhill finale of Thursday's fifth stage and succumbed to his injuries aged 26 on Friday. His team withdrew on Friday and they were joined by Swiss outfit Tudor and Belgian rivals Intermarche prior to Saturday's seventh stage. Their withdrawals comes despite organisers saying they had decided to proceed with the remainder of the race after consulting both the teams and the rider's family. Tudor, though, tweeted it could not carry on. "After careful consideration and talking to both riders and staff, the team decided not to continue racing this year's Tour de Suisse," Tudor tweeted. "Under these difficult circumstances we feel it is the human way to respect the

feelings of our riders and pay respect to Gino," it added. Intermarche followed suit. "After consultations with our riders and staff, we have decided to withdraw from the Tour of Switzerland," Intermarche posted on social media. "Our priority is to respect the mental health of our riders." Following the news of his death, the cyclists took part in a 20km ride in his honour replacing the sixth stage. Organisers however decided against cancelling the tour altogether.

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## Rain plays spoilsport in match between India A and Pakistan A

LAHORE (Agencies): ACC Women's Emerging Teams Asia Cup 2023 match between Pakistan and India was abandoned without a ball bowled due to rain at the Tin Kwong Road Recreation Ground in Hong Kong on Saturday. The two teams get a point

each of the match and ended up with four points each from three outings, said the information made available by the Pakistan Cricket Board. Both sides also qualify for the semi-finals, with India topping the table on better run-rate than Pakistan. India and Pa-

kistan will face Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, respectively in the semi-finals scheduled on Monday, 19 June. Due to continuous rain, a reserved day has been kept (20 June) for the semi-finals. The final of the tournament will be held on Wednesday, 21 June.

## WAPDA wins National Women Basketball championship

KARACHI (APP): The final of the National Women's Basketball Championship was clinched by the defending champion WAPDA at the Siddique Memon Sports Complex Gulshan Iqbal. The defending champion WAPDA defeated Islamabad Division and won the championship. The event was held under the auspices of Karachi Basketball Association and under the patronage of Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon. The chief guest of the championship was the Commissioner Karachi, according to a communiqué. In the final, WAPDA won 27-63 against Islamabad. For WAPDA, Kainat 19, Hijab, 18, Sidra, 16, while for Islamabad, Sana Khan, 16, Asma Khan, 8, Momina scored 3 points. In the third place match, Lahore Division defeated Karachi Green 46-27. Farozha 13, Faryal 8, Rida 6 from Lahore side while



Noor Fatima 8, Safa Afzal 4, and Fatima Aamir scored 3 points from Karachi side. Ishrat Amir, DPE of Mama Parsi School, performed the duties of host.

While addressing the final ceremony, Muhammad Iqbal Memon said, 'I wish all the teams of Pakistan from the bottom of my heart.'

## Taskin shines in Bangladesh's record 546-run Test win

Dhaka (AFP/APP): Bangladesh crushed Afghanistan by 546 Saturday to secure the biggest Test victory margin by runs in nearly 90 years after Taskin Ahmed saw off the tourists with a career-best 4-37. The Dhaka match ended in the extended opening session of the fourth day after a Taskin bouncer hit Zahir Khan, forcing the final batsman to retire hurt. The visitors barely made a dent in their mammoth case of 662, giving the hosts the biggest Test win by runs since Australia's 562-run victory over England in 1934. It was more than double Bangladesh's previous record of 226 wins over Zimbabwe at Chittagong in 2005. The home side's triumph was all but guaranteed after

they declared their second innings at 425-4 in Friday's final session. Afghanistan stumbled quickly, losing Ibrahim Zadran for a duck off the first ball of the innings and resuming on Saturday at a precarious 45-2. Afghanistan could show little improvement on the fourth day and lost wickets at regular intervals, with Taskin and Shoriful Islam leading Bangladesh's way. Taskin was denied his maiden five-wicket haul when he bowled last man Zahir Khan in the 33rd over of the innings, only for the umpire to signal a no ball. Afghanistan lost a wicket in the third over of the morning when Nasir Jamal edged Ebadot Hossain behind the stumps for six.

## Johnson in US Open hunt despite quadruple bogey

Los Angeles (AFP/APP): Two-time major winner Dustin Johnson clawed back from a calamitous quadruple bogey to card an even-par 70 and stay in the hunt in the second round of the US Open on Friday. Johnson, the 2016 Masters and 2020 US Open winner, had seven birdies in a six-under par 64 on Thursday that put him two off the lead shared by Rickie Fowler and Xander Schauffele – who both broke the previous record for a low round at the US Open. But Johnson said Thursday that there was plenty of trouble lurking at Los Angeles Country Club, and he found it at the second hole. In a fairway bunker off the tee, Johnson hit out to the rough left of the fairway. From there he was in the barranca, taking a penalty drop on the way to an eight at the par-four hole. "Didn't really hit that bad of a drive. Just hit it a little on the top so it didn't quite cut enough," he said.



"Caught the corner of the bunker and then chunked my bunker shot and then chunked the next one, skulled the next one. Everything that you could do wrong I did wrong. "It happens sometimes, but just battled back and played a really good round of golf." It was Johnson's third career quadruple bogey in a major championship and his first since the first hole of the final round of the 2015 PGA Championship at Whistling Straits. He responded with a birdie at the third hole.

## Hamilton leads Russell in Mercedes one-two in Canada practice

Montreal (AFP/APP): An upbeat Lewis Hamilton demonstrated his undimmed vim and speed on Friday when he led George Russell in a Mercedes one-two in a truncated and interrupted day's practice at the Canadian Grand Prix. The seven-time world champion topped the times in a best lap of one minute and 13.718 seconds to beat his team-mate by 0.027 seconds, the duo making the most of the best track conditions before heavy rain curtailed the action at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. "That was probably the bumpiest circuit we've been on for a long time," Hamilton said. "And it was such a strange day. We missed the first session because of an issue with the circuit's CCTV or something and I felt bad for the fans. "The city here is really pumping and there were so many people out there, but I am glad we did



finally get out and it was good to have an hour and a half even if we did not use all that time optimally. "But this track. I love this place. This track is mega. From the moment you leave the pitlane – it's wicked. My car was not the greatest, but not the worst by far and massively better than last year. "It's just so bumpy. We have to improve the ride control and balance in the corners and we should be all right." Hamilton has won seven times in Canada, a record he shares with Michael Schumacher.

## DAILY HOROSCOPE: JUNE 18, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.  
– **ARIES:** You need to find an emotional outlet, but that won't be hard. Almost everyone else has the same idea! People are looking for folks to talk with and listen to, so open up and enjoy the ride!  
– **TAURUS:** You need to open up to a family member about something difficult, but today's energy makes it go more smoothly than you'd have guessed. Keep the bonds between you as strong as you can!  
– **GEMINI:** You're having a hard time figuring out exactly what you want to see happen today because your thoughts are a bit muddled. Let it go for now and revisit the plan at a later time.  
– **CANCER:** Try not to make a big deal out of how things feel today. You're in such a good mood that you might kid yourself that things will always be like this! It's a good day to focus on personal issues.  
– **LEO:** You're in a good position to tackle difficult issues because your emotions are sewn up (for now), and

you should be able to keep your cool no matter what happens. See if you can do it quickly.  
– **VIRGO:** Your social energy is vital to getting your friends and family moving today, so get organized and then lead the charge! It should all be fun once the initial hurdles have been jumped.  
– **LIBRA:** While not everything is going as you'd like it to, at least you can appreciate the smaller things. If you can just lift your spirits a bit early today, it will be easy to make it through to the good times ahead.  
– **SCORPIO:** You know you need to let go of something. It may even be just a memory by now. It's the best time for that because your emotional energy is nearing a peak, and you can sense how important that is.  
– **SAGITTARIUS:** You're not on the same page as someone you need to get along with. As long as you can deal with their weird energy, you should be able to get what you need from them. Try to show them the way.  
– **CAPRICORN:** A child or acquaintance is overreacting to something you say and might sulk for far longer than required for dramatic purposes. Don't take it personally. It's just a weird day for them.  
– **ACQUARIUS:** Pets are on your mind today even if you don't have any of your own! You might be thinking about getting one or suffering with allergies provoked by a friend's furry pals. You can deal.  
– **PISCES:** Your positive emotions outweigh the negative by so much that you almost forget the bad stuff! It's a great day for play with friends or family, and you should be able to share your good mood.



## Sudan war drives one million children from homes: UN

Khartoum (AFP/APP): The conflict in Sudan has displaced more than one million children, 270,000 of them in the Darfur region, the UN children's agency (UNICEF) has said, warning more were at "grave risk". Fighting has raged in Sudan since mid-April between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). As well as the more than one million displaced, at least 330 children have been killed and more than 1,900 wounded, UNICEF said in a statement on Thursday. "Many more are at grave risk". The United Nations agency

said an estimated 13 million children were in "dire need" of humanitarian assistance. "Children are trapped in an unrelenting nightmare, bearing the heaviest burden of a violent crisis they had no hand in creating -- caught in the crossfire, injured, abused, displaced and subjected to disease and malnutrition," said UNICEF Sudan representative Mandeep O'Brien. It said the situation in Darfur, already scarred by a two-decade war that left hundreds of thousands dead and more than two million displaced, was especially concerning. "The situation in West and Central Darfur, in particular, is characterised by active

fighting, severe insecurity and looting of humanitarian supplies and facilities," UNICEF said. Daglo's RSF have their origins in the Janjaweed militias which former strongman Omar al-Bashir unleashed on ethnic minorities in the region in 2003, drawing charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Its paramilitaries have been accused of carrying out the Wednesday killing of West Darfur state governor Khamis Abdullah Abakar hours after he made remarks critical of the paramilitaries in a telephone interview with a Saudi TV channel. The RSF has denied any responsibility.

## Presidency of two holy mosques distributes more than 10,000 umbrellas



MAKKAH (APP): The General Presidency of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque affairs has distributed more than 10,000 umbrellas and 2,000 prayer mats to visitors of the Grand Mosque on late Friday. According to Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the initiative aims to provide the best services to the visitors of the grand mosque and ensure warm hospitality for the Hajj pilgrims at the grand mosque. It is to mention here the General Presidency of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque aims to facilitate the worshipers to perform religious worship and the rites in a secure and pure environment.

## Brimful clinics, cemeteries as dengue ravages Peru



Piura, Peru (AFP/APP): Two months after cyclonic downpours flooded the town of Catacaos in northern Peru, dozens of inhabitants lie sick and dying of dengue, a disease carried by mosquitoes attracted by stagnant water.

Near the border with Ecuador, Peru's Piura region is battling a new health crisis even as the South American country is still recovering from the world's highest reported Covid-19 death rate. This time it is an epidemic of dengue, a viral disease with symptoms ranging from fever, headache and joint pain to bleeding, organ failure and sometimes, death. The virus is carried by the Aedes aegypti mosquito that lays its eggs in standing water, of which there is a lot in Piura since cyclone Yaku hit northern Peru in March. Dozens of people were killed and thousands affected as rivers burst their banks, destroying homes and infrastructure. Half of the Piura region's 416 clinics were damaged by the cyclone that also paralyzed the local economy as thousands lost their ability to survive from informal jobs. Maria Francisca Sosa, 45, is one of many taking care of ailing relatives at home amid skyrocketing infections and overwhelmed public health care facilities in scenes reminiscent of the coronavirus epidemic. Her father Jose Luciano, 93, is fighting a dengue infection. "It hit him so hard that he couldn't even stand anymore. Once, he was so sick that we thought he was going to die," Sosa told AFP as she wiped her father's sweaty forehead in the shanty they share with five other people. With public health facilities overwhelmed, the family was forced to take out a loan to pay for a private doctor and medicine to treat the old man's symptoms. There is no cure for dengue.

## Kashmiris, rights bodies to stage protest against Modi's US visit next week



WASHINGTON (Agencies): A prominent Kashmiri advocacy group Thursday announced that Kashmiris and their supporters will stage a protest rally near the White House on June 22 when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets US President Joe Biden in Washington, amid India's escalating atrocities in occupied Kashmir. The Secretary-General of the World Kashmir Awareness Forum (WKAF), Ghulam Nabi Fai, told APP that he was getting immense response from the community members as well as expressions of support from several other organizations in the effort to highlight India's brutal suppression of Kashmiri people. He said that people from all over the United States and Canada were expected to come to Washington to join the demonstration that will serve as a reminder that the U.N.-pledged right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir has still not been implemented and that they continue to suffer under Indian occupation. "I am confident that Kashmiris and their supporters will be there in full force," Fai said. He also said that WKAF has also hired three digital trucks that will flash messages like "Fascist Modi does not belong to White House" as they pass by key buildings and landmarks in this capital city. Other digital messages include, "Trade with India not fine when

human rights are on decline"; "Indian democracy: Dead in Kashmir"; "Kashmir at the brink of Genocide" and "Modi guilty of crimes against humanity in Kashmir." Meanwhile, according to reports, U.S Human Rights groups are planning to hold similar protests against Modi's US visit over the "deteriorating human rights situation." The Indian American Muslim Council, Peace Action, Veterans for Peace and Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition are also set to gather near the White House on June 22. The report said the groups have also added flyers that read "Modi Not Welcome" and "Save India from Hindu Supremacy." The groups have also planned an event in New York featuring a show titled "Howdy Democracy", referring to 2019's "Howdy Modi!" rally in Texas featuring Modi and then-U.S. President Donald Trump. This comes as two human rights groups decided to organize a screening of the controversial BBC documentary, 'India: The Modi Question'. As per reports, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have invited policymakers, journalists and analysts next week to a screening in Washington the BBC documentary, whose screening was banned in India. Advocacy groups have also raised concerns over alleged human rights abuses under Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

## Morocco, Israel sign MoU to enhance health cooperation

RABAT, Morocco (Agencies): Morocco and Israel have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance their cooperation in the field of health. The deal was signed between Moroccan Health Minister Khalid Ait Taleb and his Israeli counterpart Moshe Arbel, who is currently visiting the North African nation. In a statement, the Moroccan Health Ministry said the agreement allows for the exchange of expertise and best practices in medical and technological innovation, and the fight



against non-communicable diseases.

## King Charles III rides on horseback in first official birthday parade

LONDON (AFP/APP): Britain's King Charles III Charles inspected the troops at his inaugural birthday parade on horseback Saturday, the first time the monarch has ridden at the event since his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in 1986. The annual Trooping the Colour parade marks the British sovereign's official birthday. Charles was followed on horseback by his eldest son and heir, Prince William, Charles' brother Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh, and sister Anne. Queen Camilla and William's wife Catherine, the Princess of Wales followed in a carriage. The colourful display of regimental precision and pageantry is the first of 74-year-old Charles's reign. Charles's actual birthday is on November 14 but British sovereigns celebrate twice -- once in private and again in public. The June parade tradition began in 1748 under King George II, who wanted a celebration in better summer



weather, as his own birthday was on October 30. The televised event kicked off with a procession from Buckingham Palace to Horse Guards Parade in central London. Some 1,400 soldiers, 400 musicians and 200 horses are taking part, led in the parade by Juno, a 10-year-old shire mare, alongside three other Drum Horses -- Perseus,

## BRI provides tangible benefits to Pakistan through CPEC: Pak Envoy

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque said that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are providing tangible benefits to Pakistan through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is the flagship project of the BRI. Addressing as a key speaker at the 13th China Overseas Investment Fair, the Ambassador mentioned that BRI holds great significance for Belt and Road Initiative's partner countries. This year, Pakistan is also celebrating 10th anniversary of CPEC, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. "Over the past decade, 888 km of the road network has been laid, and over 8000 additional MWs of energy have been added to Pakistan's national grid with the commissioning of 13 new energy projects. A new 878-KM

transmission line has been built to evacuate 4000MW electricity. An 820 km long cross-border optical fibre cable has been laid, and over 200,000 new jobs have been created. Various estimates have pointed out to an increase in 1-2% of the GDP of Pakistan", he added. Ambassador Moin ul Haque said that BRI has been successful in bringing down the walls of suspicions and doubts among the members of the international community and instead connected them with bridges of trade, commerce and cultural cooperation on the principles of win-win cooperation and mutual benefit. It thus transcends the artificial divides of race, religion and nationality and rallies the international community around shared dreams and common ideals.

## Saudi astronauts arrive home

Riyadh (SPA/APP): The Saudi astronauts Rayana Bernawi, Ali Al-Qarni, Mariam Fardous, and Ali Al-Ghamdi arrived in Riyadh on Saturday after the successful scientific mission they led at the International Space Station (ISS). Upon their arrival at the King Khaled International Airport, the astronauts were received by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Saudi Space Agency (SSA), Eng. Abdullah Al-Swaha; Chief of General Staff, Lieutenant-General Fayyad bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili; President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, Dr. Munir bin Mahmoud Al-Desouki; the SSA Vice Chairman, Dr. Mohammed Al-Tamimi; and CEO of King Faisal Specialist Hospital Majid Al-Fayyadh. SSA says the scientific mission will be of significant benefit to humanity and will ensure the Kingdom leading roles and an avant-garde position in space exploration. The agency also said that the leading achievements and contributions of the Saudi space mission are a source of pride for the nation all with the support of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Prime Minister and President of the Higher Council of Space. Saudi astronauts Rayana Bernawi and Ali Al-Qarni returned to Earth on May 31 from the ISS, where they conducted 14 research experiments on microgravity, three of which were kite experiments with 12,000 school students from 47 locations across the Kingdom via satellite.

## South Africa's Ramaphosa tells Putin 'war has to have an end'

Moscow (Agencies): South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who is in Russia as part of a peace-seeking delegation, on Saturday told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin that the conflict in Ukraine had to stop. "This war has to have an end... It must be settled through negotiations and through diplomatic means," said Ramaphosa. He added that his delegation, consisting of seven African leaders, "came with a very clear message: that this war has to be ended."

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